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ABSTRACT

The Educational Research Forum on the CompuServe communication network consists of three parts. The online conferencing area enables users to communicate by typing messages. Communication may be private or stored in the electronic journal for other users to read. The bulletin board, or electronic mail, enables users to send or receive messages. These are organized into ten sections of interest which include MidWestern Educational Research Association, Administration/Teacher Education, Curriculum and Instruction, Learning and Cognition, Statistics and Research Methodology, Human Development and Counseling, Special Education/Motivation, Education in the Medical Professions, Evaluation and Measurement, and Directors of Research and Evaluation. The electronic journal, Midwestern Association Electronic Journal of Educational Research (MAEJER) organizes papers according to the same sections as messages in electronic mail. Five helpfiles exist on a continuing basis. The Forum provides an immediate and cost effective method of communicating research information. (DWH)

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Educational Research Computer Network on CompuServe

Jean Pierce

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In a presidental speech presented at the Mid-Western Educational Research Association, a microcomputer network for Educational Researchers was described. The Educational Research Forum on the CompuServe communication network consists of three parts: online conferencing, electronic mail, and an electronic journal. The Forum is divided into 11 sections, most of which reflect general topics of interest to educational researchers.

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Educational Research Computer Network on CompuServe

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I have spent the last couple of months setting up a Forum for Educational Researchers on the CompuServe communications network. It is ready for use now by you and your colleagues who need to communicate with other researchers to share and compare the findings hot off your data print-out sheets.

What is a communication network?

I am referring to a network of terminals, micros, or communication word processors that are linked together via a central computer in Columbus, Ohio. Rather than paying for a phone call to Ohio, you would make a local call to one of many phone numbers. Once online, you will be greeted with menues filled with various choices. You will select one of the choices, type it in, and enter the Forum. Communication takes place via typing. Armed with a directory of commands, you can instruct the computer to display certain kinds of messages--e.g. those pertaining to evaluation and measurement. You can search for and read articles of interest, you can submit articles or leave messages, and you can hold a typed conversation with anyone else who is on-line.

First for an overview of the Forum. There will be three basic parts: the conference area, the bulletin boards, and the databases (including an electronic journal).

Conference Area

The conference area is equivalent to a CB or phone call. People who enter the area communicate by typing messages which appear on their monitors. This area could be used for:

1) Conversations between two or more people.

2) Meetings of the MWERA executive board, which will be regularly scheduled.

3) Announced discussions of topics

4) Each Wednesday evening at 8:00 Chicago time, I shall be online to answer questions, etc.

Several different conversations may go on at once--on different channels. Conversations between two or more people may be private. Conferences and meetings may be recorded and stored in the journal for others to read at another time.

Electronic Mail

You will be able to send or read messages as long as 96 lines or 2500 characters (most will be shorter). A message may be sent to a specific person or may be addressed to "All." If a message is sent to an individual, the next time the recipient enters the Forum, he or she will be told "You have mail waiting." Messages are likely to concern:

1) Employment opportunities--Brief description of job, contact person.

2) RFP's--Brief description of topic, date due, and where to find out more, including contact person.

3) State and Federal Policies--Brief description of proposed or recently passed policies that impact educators and educational research and information about where to find out more. (We are trying to get AERA's Washington liaison to help out here.)

4) Researchers Looking for Collaborators for Studies--Brief description of topic.

5) Software--Description of or requests for educational and statistical software.

6) Comments Concerning MAEJER Articles.

7) Questions and Comments for Me, the Sysop (System Operator)--Problems or suggestions will be handled here.

Messages are organized according to the following sections.

0) Miscellaneous/Help

1) MWERA

2) Administration/Teacher Education

3) Curriculum and Instruction

4) Learning and Cognition

5) Statistics and Research Methodology

6) Human Development and Counseling

7) Special Education/Motivation

8) Education in the Medical Professions

9) Evaluation and Measurement

10) Directors of Research and Evaluation

Messages are submitted to one of these sections and may be read accordingly. You may compose a message in a word processor before you dial into the system, then send it when you are online. Or you may compose and edit the message while online in the Forum. Members of the Forum may read all messages that are not sent privately, or they may read only the most recent messages within a certain section, read a thread of messages all pertaining to the same topic, etc. The system stores about 250 messages. The oldest ones are deleted automatically, and recipients may choose to delete messages after reading them. If your terminal program permits it, messages may be saved in a buffer and printed out.

MAEJER

The electronic journal is called the Midwestern Association Electronic Journal of Educational Research (MAEJER). Articles may be typed while online, or they may be typed ahead of time and sent either to my computer or to CompuServe. Similarly, articles may be read on the monitor, saved to disk, and printed on a printer. Since a review process delays the sharing and discussion of research results, everything legitimate that is submitted will be printed in the journal. The review process will take place through feedback that the author gets in messages.

Papers are organized according to the same sections as the messages. Articles do not need to pertain to computers in any way. Sections 2 through 10 contain articles that are written to obtain feedback and establish a dialogue. For instance, you might submit one to a section of interest to you. Then people in the Forum who have found results bearing on your findings could either share their findings in other articles, send messages to you, or meet with you during a discussion in the conference area. A transcript of that conference would also be included in the appropriate section. Research results will be immediately published in the Forum--not delayed a year or two as in other journals. But there is limited space--about 1000 pages. So every so often--perhaps once a year--the oldest articles will be removed from the Forum and,

if the authors choose, submitted to the editorial board of the Mid-Western Educational Researcher, to decide which ones they want to publish. All authors will retain their copyrights and will be free to resubmit articles to traditional journals. Authors will receive a small royalty from CompuServe: 5% of the charge for time users spend reading the articles.

Helpfiles

Finally, the following helpfiles exist on a continuing basis.

1) How to upload articles into the journal
2) How to read the journal
3) How to read and send messages efficiently
4) Rules for conducting a discussion in the conference area
5) MWERA'S brochure.

Questions

What will CompuServe do for us that we can't do now?

1) Have a typed conversation with someone at great savings over the cost of a phone call. For instance, if I want to call someone in Minneapolis at nighttime, it will cost me $2.70 for ten minutes. But I can communicate with them via CompuServe for $1.33 for ten minutes. Of course, the conversation goes only as quickly as you can type, but you will find that you communicate with fewer words. Remember, that long messages may be composed ahead of time and sent through the electronic mail part of the Forum.
2) Send and receive mail instantly--you do not even need to wait overnight for someone to receive your message.
3) Dialogue on research--you will not need to wait a year or two before your article is in print then another year or two before an article is written in response to yours. Scenario: Frank Farley writes an article about brain processing. He uploads it into the system and leaves a message for me that it is there. I put the article online in the Forum. Barb Hutson downloads it to her disk,

prints it, or reads it at her terminal. She sends a message to Frank telling him she is doing some similar research but she's getting different results. She might submit a short report of her findings to the same section of the journal. Frank sends a message to her asking her to meet him in the conference area for a discussion. They decide to collaborate long-distance on a study. They meet periodically in the Forum to compare progress with the study.

Is it just for MWERA members?

No. CompuServe is a nation-wide system. Anyone may join the Forum, but they will be given information about MWERA. Educators who are not conducting research will be able to read and comment on the articles, as well.

What equipment will you need?

A terminal, a microcomputer, or a communicating word processor, a monitor, and a modem--a telephone hook up. The modem has a terminal program that you can use, or you may wish to get a more sophisticated program. Users do <u>not</u> need to own the equipment they use.

What does it cost, and who pays the bill--the owner of the equipment or the user of the system?

Prime time is 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Standard time is 6:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., all day Saturday and Sunday, and announced CompuServe holidays. (From 5:00 until 8:00 weekday mornings, service is on an as-available basis. If any part of a session goes past 8:00, the whole session is charged prime time.

The standard time charge is $6.00 per hour if your terminal program communicates at a normal rate--300 baud (baud refers to the number of characters transmitted each second). There is no monthly charge so if you do not use it for a month, you will pay nothing that month. Prime daytime rates for 300 baud are $12.50 per hour. The only additional charge is the cost of a phone call to the city with the nearest access telephone number. If that city has a CompuServe phone number, the

access is free. If the number is through another telecommunications network, there is a $2 surcharge. For instance, I call a number in a village 20 miles from my home. A call to that village is free from my phone, but I pay $2.00 an hour because the number is not a CompuServe number. For me, the nearest CompuServe phone number is in Chicago, but a call to Chicago costs me $3.28 an hour. Charges will be billed directly to your VISA or Master Card account. If you choose to be billed directly, it costs $3.00 per statement.

6) How does one gain access to CompuServe?

Call 800-848-8199 or go to Radio Shack or another computer store and get a Starter's Kit for $19.95. Starter's kits are also available through Sears and Spiegel's catalogs. The kit provides you with immediate access to CompuServe.It also includes a Dow Jones user's guide, a general CompuServe user's guide, and an hour's time on each, Dow Jones and the rest of CompuServe.

I truly believe that there is a lot of potential in this means of communicating knowledge--but it won't work unless a lot of people know about it and have access to it. I am going to spread the word at AERA, but in the meantime, I am relying on you to tell others in your department and others with whom you would like to communicate about research on an immediate and cost-effective basis.